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ABSTRACT

The report of a study that investigated the views held by Botswana and U.S. K-12 teachers on a variety of contemporary educational issues prominent in the United States is presented. The study concerned itself with the level of agreement or disagreement between the views of the two groups of teachers, and contends that interpretations of such information might be useful in forecasting certain trends within the schools of each country and whether the two systems are converging or diverging from one another. Responses to a questionnaire distributed to teachers in both countries suggested a great disparity between the two groups with respect to their views on contemporary educational issues. The level of statistical difference between the two groups is reported, yet the causes for the disparity are found to be outside the scope of this research. Several tables of statistical data appear in the report. (DB)

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CROSS-NATIONAL SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AS EXPRESSED BY BOTSWANA AND AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

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CROSS-NATIONAL SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AS EXPRESSED BY BOTSWANA AND AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

The economic, social, cultural and political distance between a developed and a developing country is most often great. Due to a variety of conditions, even the country's perception of their own conditions are dramatically influenced more by inward rather than outward forces. And depending on the information infrastructure within the developing country, the amount and level of knowledge about themselves can be quite limiting.

The institution of an educational system is also affected by the above forces. Many elements effect the growth and development of a school system in any country, but it is even more dramatic in a developing country. The development of an institution in a highly industrialized country is evolutionary in nature, whereas, due to the need for "immediate progress", a developing country creates institutions, such as a modern school system, in a matter of years.

In recent years, research related to the effects of community on teachers has often emphasized structural differences in school district size and organization (Samuels, 1974), or the need for parent involvement (Lightfoot, 1978; Epstein, 1985; Leichter, 1978). While it would be interesting to pursue the effect of community standards on teacher attitudes we will have to assume at this point that the attitudes of the teachers measured in this study is only a very general reflection of the attitudes held by the community in which these teachers live (Tyack, 1974).

Perceptions held by the professionals within the institution are, therefore, important to measure because such images of the system can reveal basic values which often dictate the future direction that the institution might be headed (Sherif and Sherif, 1956; Newcomb et al., 1965) In the case of the public school system, by measuring teacher's attitudes toward a variety of contemporary educational issue one can often glean basic attitudes which are interrelated to other broader attitudes that might impact any future direction taken by the schools (Krech et al., 1962; McGrath, 1964). This would be true for any country regardless of its economic vitality.

What is even more interesting to the comparative educational researcher is to compare the results of two similar attitudinal studies conducted in two divergent countries to determine the extent to which the two countries view similar

issues differently. Also, in any cross-cultural setting, no discussion of action could be conducted without running into conflicting assumptions about how or why a given action will affect the educational process and its outcomes (van Velzen, et al., 1985, Care (1986).

Purpose of the Study

This study assumes that teacher attitudes toward educational issues may be directly related to the future direction of an educational system. The study is an investigation of the views held by Botswana and American K-12 teachers toward a variety of contemporary educational issues prominent in the United States. The study is basically interested in determining the extent to which the two country's teachers express their views towards these issues. By determining the degree of agreement/disagreement by these two groups certain interpretations can be made about the "value" distance between the two countries with respect to education. Such interpretations might then extend themselves to forecasting certain future trends within the schools of each country thus, predicting, to some extent, whether the systems are converging or diverging from each other. The results might also suggest the extent to which outside educational technical assistance from a developing to a developed country might be valuable.

Methodology

Sample

Participants

The participants in the study were K-12 teachers in the two countries of Botswana and the United States. The Botswana teachers, who numbered 90, were fairly distributed over several areas of the country, whereas the U.S. participants, who numbered 86, were all from urban areas in southern California, specifically the San Diego area. While the majority(67%) of the Botswana teachers were male only 39% of the American teachers were men. Also, due to the general economic development of Botswana, 75% of the subjects came from rural areas while fully 96% of the American teachers labeled themselves as urban or suburban dwellers. Also, in measuring the educational achievement of the teachers, 100% of the American téachers had a bachelors degree or higher, while only 25% of the Botswana teachers had similar degrees.

Thus, while the actual number of participants was very similar between the two countries, the participant demographics reflected each country's profile and, therefore, major dissimilarities between the participants was evident and inescapable.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire, which consisted of 23 Likert scale items, was created which reflected some major contemporary educational issues confronting American public schools. This questionnaire was then sent to Botswana where it was revised to reflect the proper terminology and educational system in Botswana. Both sets of questionnaires were distributed to the participants between May-September, 1989.

The Botswana questionnaires were returned to the United States where they were collectively analyzed along with the American questionnaires.

Statistical Analysis

The chi-square test of significance(Pearson) was employed to test degree of difference between the two participant samples.

Findings

Group-to-Group Comparisons

Table I illustrates the degree to which the two participant groups differed from each other with respect to the 18 educational issues represented in the instrument. They are ranked 1-18 based on the response degree of similarity and dissimilarity. Thus, the first educational issue, the "Adequacy of Teaching Time", held the highest level of similar scoring, i.e. the Botswana teachers and the U.S. teachers felt that the amount of actual teaching time during the school day was "about right".

The findings discussion will first focus on the top three areas of disagreement followed by the top three areas of agreement.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF BOTSWANA AND AMERICAN TEACHER RESPONSES BY KEY EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Educational Issue	Chi-Square	D.F.
1. Adequacy of Teaching Time	3.059	2
2. Improvement of Classroom Discipline	4.753	2
3. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	6.817	2
4. AM/PM Programs for Working Parents	9.314	4
5. National AIDS School Policy	13.257*	4
6. AIDS Students Should Attend School	13.675**	4
7. Competitive Sports Important at School	25.726**	4
8. Teachers Evaluated by Student Achievement	25.813**	4
9. Educational Quality has Improved	26.640**	4
10. Grade when AIDS Education Should Begin	21.859**	9
11. Competency Test Determine Advancement	31.065**	4
12. Parent Free Choice for School	30.416**	4
13. Students Attend Year-Round School	33.243**	4
14. No Non-Classroom Duties for Teachers	35.442**	4
15. Teacher Unions have Improved Education	38.900**	4
16. Knowledge Students Most Lacking	42.458**	3
17. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	48.744**	4
18. Teachers Report Child Abuse Cases	80.449**	4

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
** Significant at the .01 level of confidence

A. greatest disagreement

The area of greatest dissimilarity in scoring related to item number 18 which stated that "Teachers should be required to report any case of suspected child abuse". The two group's responses were significantly different at the .01 level of confidence. Almost 40% of the Botswana teachers strongly disagreeing with this statement with only 17% strongly agreeing, while the American teachers expressed an opposite view with almost 100% somewhat or strongly agreeing with this same statement. The great difference between the two groups on this question might be related to one or more factors: (1) the interpretation of the term "Child Abuse" might be different, or (2) the Botswana society does, in fact, handle "Child Abuse" cases in a different manner than their American counterparts.

The second greatest difference between the two groups dealt with which factors would contribute to a quality improvement of the teaching profession. The Americans put much greater emphasis on higher salaries while the Botswana heavily emphasized the need to offer advancement opportunities. One could surmise that advancement for the Botswana carries with it not only a higher level of status but also a raise in salary, while the American emphasis on salary alone is void of any status enhancement. Again, the interpretation of the word "Advancement" might be different between the two groups. For the Botswana it is felt that advancement means moving from teaching at the elementary to the high school level. Clearly, higher status and higher salary is earned by high school teachers in Botswana.

The third area of greatest disagreement related to the knowledge which students are most lacking. The Americans, perhaps reflecting recent news articles dealing with poor student performance with geographical knowledge, mentioned this curricula first followed by basic skills and cultural literacy second and third respectfully. The Botswana teachers viewed the student's lack of basic skill development as by far the most lacking with science knowledge and cultural literacy a distant second and third. Geographical knowledge was hardly mentioned. It appears clear that the Americans are more specific in viewing their students' areas of curricula weakness whereas the Botswana are very decisive in pinpointing the more general category of basic skills as the most deficient curricula area.

B. greatest agreement

At the other end of the spectrum, the area of greatest agreement dealt with the extent to which each group was comfortable with the amount of classroom teaching time. Each group displayed strong agreement with each other that the amount of time was about right with each group almost

evenly split between stating that there was not enough or too much time.

The second area of greatest agreement related to how to improve classroom discipline. Again both groups of teachers strongly felt that "increased parental support" was the most important factor to consider followed by an increase in teacher power and finally an increase in administrative support. It appears that the emphasis on parental support for effective schools might be a universal value.

Finally, the third are of general agreement had to do with how to improve the quality of teaching. Both teacher groups strongly favored an increase in in-service training. Much lower emphasis should be given to requiring teacher competency tests or increasing teacher education requirements. Again, we might surmise that a general universal view among teachers is the need for constant in-service training to up-grade their teaching skills. Also, the low value placed on increasing pre-service teacher training requirements appears to be equally universal.

While there were a few areas of general agreement (with chi-squares displaying no significance at less than at the .05 level), as can be seen in Table I the large majority of educational issues, or 78% of the total, were viewed in significantly different ways by the two groups. Perhaps this should be expected since we were comparing two very distinct population groups with obvious major differences in social and economic patterns.

Category Comparisons

Another way to view the results is to categorize the 18 issues into four different clusters: (1) Role of the Teacher, (2) Educational Improvement, (3) Current Western Issues, and (4) Curricula Issues. Table II displays the results of this analysis. There appears to be much more general agreement between the two groups when asked to express their views on their role as a teacher with 50% of the issues displaying close agreement. When asked to express their views on how to improve their countries' educational system there was hardly any agreement with 86% of issues reflecting significant disagreement. This was generally true also when viewing those issues categorized as current western issues where the teachers expressed disagreement 80% of the time. Finally, with the two curricula issues, which might also reflect a western bias in the selection process, there was 100% disagreement expressed. A minor, but discernible pattern, suggests that there is much more general agreement when it comes to expressing their views about their own roles as teachers which one might categorize as an internal/personal observation, but when asked to express views toward

external/impersonal issues the two teacher groups display major areas of disagreement.

TABLE II

COMPARISON OF BOTSWANA AND AMERICAN TEACHER RESPONSES BY KEY EDUCATIONAL ISSUE CATEGORIES

Categories	Chi-Square	D.F.
A. Role of Teacher		
1. Adequacy of Teaching Time	3.059	2
2. Improvement of Classroom Discipline	4.753	2
14. No Non-Classroom Duties for Teachers	35.442**	4
17. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	48.744**	4
B. Improvement of Education		
3. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	6.817	2
8. Teachers Evaluated by Student Achievement	25.813**	4
9. Educational Quality has Improved	26.640**	4
11. Competency Test Determine Advancement	31.065**	4
12. Parent Free Choice for School	30.416**	4
13. Students Attend Year-Round School	33.243**	4
15. Teacher Unions have Improved Education	38.900**	4
C. Current Western Issues		
4. AM/PM Programs for Working Parents	9.314	4
5. National AIDS School Policy	13.257*	4
6. AIDS Students Should Attend School	13.675**	4
10. Grade when AIDS Education Should Begin	21.859**	9
18. Teachers Report Child Abuse Cases	80.449**	4
D. Curricula Issues		
7. Competitive Sports Important at School	25.726**	4
16. Knowledge Students Most Lacking	42.458**	3

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
** Significant at the .01 level of confidence

Testing for Internal Validity

In order to demonstrate internal validity of the instrument, a chi-square test of significance was conducted on two Botswana groups by teaching experience, group A with 1-10 years experience and group B with 11 or more years of experience. As can be seen, out of the 18 issues only three displayed any significant difference. The results of this test are displayed in Table II.

TABLE III

COMPARISON OF BOTSWANA TEACHERS BY EXPERIENCE AND BY KEY EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Educational Issue	Chi-Square	D.F.
1. Adequacy of Teaching Time	2.97	6
2. Improvement of Classroom Discipline	4.49	6
3. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	1.14	6
4. AM/PM Programs for Working Parents	6.33	12
5. National AIDS School Policy	12.61	9
6. AIDS Students Should Attend School	12.08	9
7. Competitive Sports Important at School	8.41	12
8. Teachers Evaluated by Student Achievement	11.25	12
9. Educational Quality has Improved	34.21**	12
10. Grade when AIDS Education Should Begin	24.54	27
11. Competency Test Determine Advancement	29.21**	12
12. Parent Free Choice for School	5.66	12
13. Students Attend Year-Round School	8.42	9
14. No Non-Classroom Duties for Teachers	19.87	12
15. Teacher Unions have Improved Education	18.66	12
16. Knowledge Students Most Lacking	5.92	9
17. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	7.55	6
18. Teachers Report Child Abuse Cases	25.97*	12

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence

Table III represents a similar test of significance conducted on the same two groups by educational experience but only from the American sample. As noted in Table III, there were no issues which measured any significant areas of disagreement. Thus, the internal validity of the American teacher sampling group appears to be very high.

TABLE IV

COMPARISON OF AMERICAN TEACHERS BY EXPERIENCE AND BY KEY EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Educational Issue	Chi-Square	D.F.
1. Adequacy of Teaching Time	5.83	6
2. Improvement of Classroom Discipline	4.82	6
3. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	5.21	6
4. AM/PM Programs for Working Parents	7.62	12
5. National AIDS School Policy	5.21	9
6. AIDS Students Should Attend School	13.61	9
7. Competitive Sports Important at School	15.08	12
8. Teachers Evaluated by Student Achievement	15.76	12
9. Educational Quality has Improved	14.91	12
10. Grade when AIDS Education Should Begin	30.21	27
11. Competency Test Determine Advancement	16.34	12
12. Parent Free Choice for School	11.32	12
13. Students Attend Year-Round School	12.61	9
14. No Non-Classroom Duties for Teachers	19.98	12
15. Teacher Unions have Improved Education	9.51	12
16. Knowledge Students Most Lacking	9.14	9
17. Improve Quality of Teaching Profession	8.12	6
18. Teachers Report Child Abuse Cases	9.81	12

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
**Significant at the .01 level of confidence

Conclusions

Over all, the findings strongly suggest a great disparity between the Botswana and American teachers with respect to their views on contemporary educational issues. Out of 18 general categories the views expressed toward fourteen categories (78%) indicated a significant difference between the responses. The large majority of the responses to the categories were significant at the .01 level of confidence. There does appear to be more general agreement when the expressed views are more inner-directed(teachers role) rather than outer-directed.

What cannot be determined from the data are the causes for these disparities. Possible reasons for the differences could be (1) the great cultural distance between the two

countries, (2) the disparity between rural and urban samples, (3) the difference in the educational level of the two samples, (4) the types of issues selected for the instrument or, (5) a combination of the above.

This type of study is useful to ascertain some of the differences in thinking between two groups of people who come from two very distinct socio-economic climates. Much can be learned about the values held by each group of subjects and exposed through their responses. It is vital that in any interpretation of the results that skilled individuals who understand each of the cultural groups be available to interpret any causative questions. Much insight can be gained through a careful analysis of the results. Also, the results from this type of study can be very useful for those that might find themselves working closely with the counterpart group that is represented in the study. For example, American educators working with Botswana educators to improve the educational system of Botswana would find such information most helpful, and the same would be true for Botswana working or studying in the U.S.

If one is interested in the question of causation with respect to these results then one should view this study as preliminary. A follow-up study could delve more deeply into the possible reason(s) for the disparity in responses. For example, a future study could more tightly control the sample group so that each sample is much more demographically similar to each other, especially with respect to rural/urban, educational level, age and teaching experience. Other studies of a similar nature could isolate other variables which might lead to a clearer understanding for the cause of such disparity in educational opinion between two groups of teachers from such different parts of the world.

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